

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 18, 2003

Anthony J. Principi
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC 20011

Dear Secretary Principi:

We are gravely concerned the department of Veterans Affairs is seriously considering closing the only residential Alzheimer's unit in the entire VA health system.

The "Development of Alternative Solutions for the East Market" (Realignment Studies ~ Final Data Run) released on November 21, 2003, lists 5 alternatives for the Bedford Veterans Hospital, 4 of which will have a brutally negative impact on the patient population.

As you know, the Bedford Veterans Hospital is well respected across the country as a premier Geriatrics Research Education and Clinical Center (GRECC). Bedford is the only Veteran's hospital designated as an Alzheimer's Disease Education & Referral Center (ADEAR) and is world-renowned for its research of Alzheimer's Disease. Because of its location, Bedford has a vibrant affiliation with Boston University, Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard University Medical School, and other notable institutions.

The hospital's Alzheimer's patients and families voluntarily participate in the research program, forming a unique population of individuals whose medical history from age 18 is scientifically documented. Research with this extraordinary population has produced literally hundreds of clinical scientific publications, including several leading textbooks in the field. Because of this research, improvement in Alzheimer's Disease diagnosis, staging of the patients and care for patients at home as well as inpatient management has been realized.

Much of the research has permitted a reduction in the progression of the disease permitting longer home care realizing a significant reduction in patient care costs. This research has led to an improved quality of life for the veterans, the families and the families of all Americans who suffer from Alzheimer's Disease.

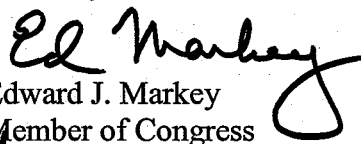
Mr. Secretary, the impact of any closure or converting Bedford Veterans Hospital into an outpatient facility will be disastrous, particularly for those diagnosed with advanced Alzheimer's Disease. It is a proven medical fact that to move patients in this condition creates profound confusion, severely advances the disease, and leads to an acceleration of death. Ultimately, Alzheimer's research conducted by the Bedford hospital would be decimated by removing and dispersing the patient population that has

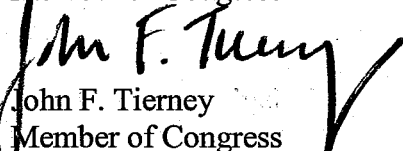
fueled it, the well trained staff that will not be able to relocate in tote and abandonment of valuable, recently renovated and irreplaceable facilities. Any closure would devastate the only Alzheimer's treatment and research center in the VA hospital system and its effect would be felt beyond The Veteran Hospital system.

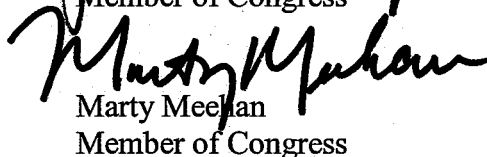
The Geriatrics Research Education and Clinical Centers were created *"to enhance the care of aged veterans through a comprehensive and integrated program of basic and applied research, development and evaluation of new clinical models and education."* Over 4.5 million Americans suffer from Alzheimer's Disease. Almost half of those over age 85 suffer from Alzheimer's. With 42,000 veterans over 65 in Massachusetts alone the Bedford Veterans hospital is a statement that we serve them as they served America

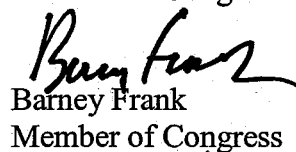
Mr. Secretary, we urge you to abandon any recommendation for realignment that would shutter or weaken the vital role of this essential facility.

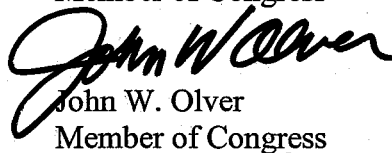
Sincerely,

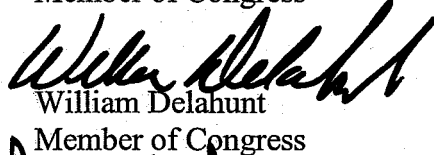

Edward J. Markey
Member of Congress

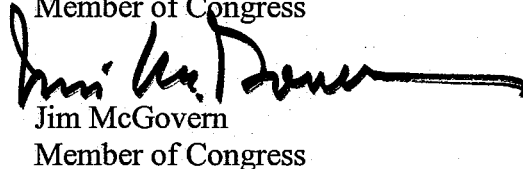

John F. Tierney
Member of Congress

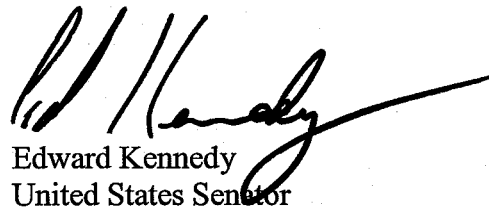

Marty Meenan
Member of Congress


Barney Frank
Member of Congress

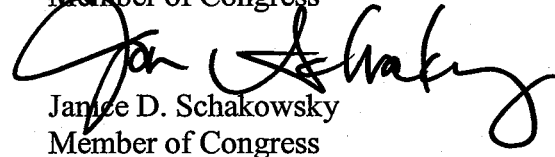

John W. Olver
Member of Congress

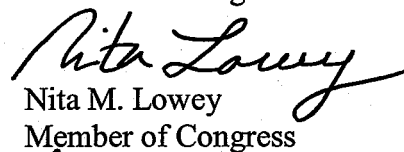

William Delahunt
Member of Congress

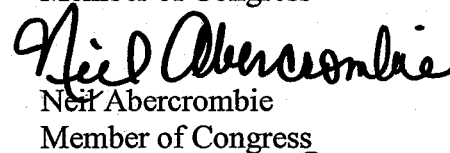

Jim McGovern
Member of Congress

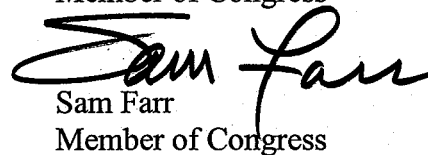

Edward Kennedy
United States Senator



Elinor E. Cummings
Member of Congress

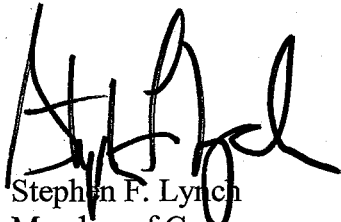

Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress


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Member of Congress


Neil Abercrombie
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Dale E. Kildee
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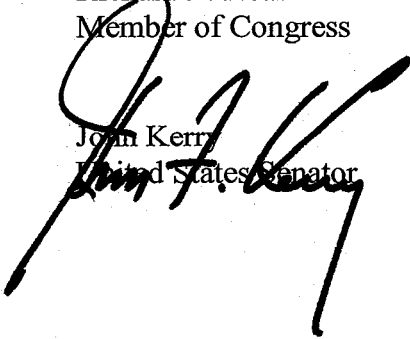
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Michael Capuano
Member of Congress



Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress



John Kerry
United States Senator



Gene Green
Member of Congress



Patrick J. Kennedy
Member of Congress